

MEMOIR

PRESENTED TO

THE AMERICAN CONVENTION

FOR PROMOTING

THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY,

AND

Improving the Condition of the African Race,

DECEMBER 11th, 1818;

CONTAINING

Some Remarks upon the civil Dissentions of the hitherto afflicted People of Hayti, as the Inhabitants of that Island may be connected with Plans for the Emigration of such Free Persons of Colour as may be disposed to remove to it, in case its Reunion, Pacification and Independence should be established.

TOGETHER WITH

Some Account of the Origin and Progress of the Efforts for effecting the Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania and its neighbourhood, and throughout the World.

BY PRINCE SAUNDERS.

PHILADELPHIA;

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To the American Convention, for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the African Race.

Respected Gentlemen and Friends,

AT a period so momentous as the present, when the friends of abolition and emancipation, as well as those whom observation and experience might teach us to beware to whom we should apply the endearing appellations, are professedly concerned for the establishment of an Asylum for those Free Persons of Colour, who may be disposed to remove to it, and for such persons as shall hereafter be emancipated from slavery, a careful examination of this subject is imposed upon us.

So large a number of abolitionists, convened from different sections of the country, is at all times and under any circumstances, an interesting spectacle to the eye of the philanthropist; how doubly delightful then is it, to me, whose interests and feelings so largely partake in the object you have in view, to behold this convention engaged in solemn deliberation upon those subjects employed to promote the improvement of the condition of the African race.

It was in this city and its vicinity, that the eccen-

tric, the humane, the pious, and the practically philanthropic Lay, was the first who laboured to draw aside that thick, and then impenetrable veil, with which prejudice and avarice had obscured the enormities of the slave-trade; being seemingly conscious that it was only necessary that its iniquitous and barbarous character should be discovered and known in order to effect its condemnation and abolition, by every community of practical christians.

This commonwealth was, also, the scene of a great portion of the benevolent exertions of that early and zealous advocate for the injured descendants of Africa, the candid and upright Sandiford.

Philadelphia had the honour and the happiness of being for years adorned and illumined by the beneficial light of the precepts and example of that distinguished philanthropist, the late venerable and excellent Benezet. Those rays of the light of truth and justice, which had beamed upon his own mind and heart, and which he communicated to the public through the medium of the press, in this country, were sent across the Atlantic; and Anthony Benezet's historical account of Guinea seems to have done much towards interesting the mind of the celebrated Thomas Clarkson, upon the great subject of the abolition. This city and its neighbourhood were the region, which was enlightened by the residence and labours of that illustrious pattern of practical beneficence, the pious and humane Woolman.

Among other distinguished abolitionists, who were contemporaries with Woolman and Benezet, the late Warner Mifflin, of Kent county in Delaware, stands preeminently conspicuous. So deeply did he become impressed with a sense of the injustice, and the inhumanity of holding slaves, that he fixed upon a day for the emancipation of thirty-seven persons of colour, who were received from his father. On that interesting occasion it appears that he called them into his chamber, one after the other, and that the following is the substance of the conversation which took place between him and one of them: "Well, my friend James, how old art thou?" "My master," said he, "I am twenty-nine years and a half old." The master replied, "Thou shouldst have been free at twenty-one years of age, as our white brethren are. Religion and humanity enjoin it upon me this day to give thee thy liberty, and justice commands me to pay thee for eight and a half year's services: which, at 21*l.* 5*s.* per year, including thy food and raiment, makes the sum of 95*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* which I owe thee." Would that every slave holder would "go and do likewise."

The names of Emberton, Wistar, and Rush, who have been successively called to preside over the interests of the Abolition Society, in this city, will be cherished in affectionate remembrance, in conjunction with those of many other eminently distinguished abolitionists, in different parts of the

United States, who have also passed the bourn of that more elevated scene of human destiny, where the wicked cease from troubling and oppressing their fellow beings, and where the weary have entered upon an interminable state of rest, felicity and immortal peace, in those bright mansions, which the King of Glory has gone to prepare for the reception of all these who have, with religious fidelity and care, assiduously cherished and cultivated that celestial principle, which the inspiration of the Almighty hath lighted up in the soul of every individual; and which, when duly nurtured and improved, must inevitably bring forth the fruits of those beneficent, philanthropic, humane, benevolent and pious affections, which constitute that pure and elevated charity and love, which fulfill all the laws of christian purity and human excellence.

To those who have thus laboured to discipline their minds and hearts, and to bring them into an entire subjection and imitation of the great example of excellence, by religiously considering the wrongs endured by those persecuted and afflicted children of sorrow, whose liberty has been cloven down by the artifice, intrigue, violence or oppressive cruelty, of the stronger portion of mankind; to such as have so believed, and practised, are the thoughts of an immortality beaming with the lustre of a faith so strong, and a hope so clear and transporting, peculiarly interesting.

To those excellent men who have exemplified the dignity of human nature by their labour of practical piety and goodness, while sojourning in this state of discipline and probation, by becoming the protectors of the friendless, among all the various descriptions of their brethren of mankind; to them belongs the happiness of looking forward with delightful anticipation to that animating period, when the great and excellent benefactors of the human race shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever, for the illumination of that eternal city, which hath foundation, whose maker and builder is God Almighty, in the heavens.

Many of the most distinguished and enlightened individuals in different regions, and among various nations, are habitual in their labours to unbind the chains of unjust captivity and servitude; and to set the innocent victims of avarice and cupidity upon the broad basis of the enjoyment of those unalienable rights, which the universal Parent has entrusted to the care of every individual among his intelligent, and accountable children.

And if those who consider the poor, in the ordinary concerns of charity and pious alms giving, are authorised to look for the favour of providence; with how much more full an assurance may those who have delivered their fellow beings from the inhuman grasp of the unprincipled kidnapper, or saved them from dragging out a miserable existance, amidst the

thraldoms of the most abject slavery; with what confident expectation of becoming the recipients of that inconceivably glorious recompence of reward, which God has prepared for those who love and obey him, (and keep his commandments,) may such persons anticipate the period when Christ shall reappear, to make up his jewels.

Among the various projects or plans which have been devised or suggested, in relation to emigration, there are none which appear to many persons to wear so much the appearance of feasibility, and ultimate successful and practical operation, as the luxuriant, beautiful and extensive island of Hayti, (or St. Domingo.) This vast island is situated between lat. $17^{\circ} 40'$ and 20° north, and between long. $68^{\circ} 30'$, and $74^{\circ} 30'$ west. Its length from Cape Engano to Cape Tiburon, is 430 miles. Its greatest breadth from Cape Beata to point Isabella, is said to be 160 miles. It contains about 28,000 square miles.

The merchandize landed in the various ports of France, from the Island of St. Domingo, in the year 1789, were as follows : 84,617,328 lbs. of coffee, 217,463 casks of sugar, white and brown, 5,836 casks of molasses, 3,257,610 lbs of indigo, 1,536,017 lbs. of cocoa, 11,317,226 lbs. of cotton wool, 1,514 seroons of Spanish cochineal, 6,814 tons of logwood, Nicaragua wood, Fustic, and Lignumvitæ, 1,685 tons of Mahogany, 4,618 bags of black

pepper, 2,426 bags of ginger, 380 casks of guiacum and other gums, 248 boxes of aloes, cassia, and China root, 26,943 hides, tanned, 114,639 hides in the hair; from the Spaniards 4,167 lbs. tortoise shell, 27,812 casks of syrup, 1,364 of sweet meats, 1,478 seroons of Jesuit's bark, 2,617,530 dollars, 57,218 ounces of gold in grains. The total value of these products was estimated at 6,094,230 pounds sterling.

According to Mr. Edwards the average exports before the revolution consisted of 58,642,214 lbs. of clayed sugar, 85,549,829 lbs. of Muscovado, 71,663,187 lbs. of coffee, 6,698,858 pounds of cotton, 951,607 hogsheads of indigo, 23,061 hogsheads of molasses, 2,600 hogsheads of an inferior kind of rum called taffia, 6,500 raw hides, and 7,900 tanned ones. The value of which exports was equal to 4,765,129 pounds sterling.

That city, which was formerly called Cape Francois, but now Cape Henry, before the revolution contained between 800 and 900 houses of stone and brick; 8,000 free inhabitants and 12,000 slaves. The duties on exports from that port in 1789, amounted to 253,590 dollars 37 cents.

Port au Prince, in 1790, contained 600 dwelling houses, 2,754 whites, and 12,000 persons of colour; the duties on exports in 1789, amounted to 189, 945 dollars 46 cents.

The whole value of exports from France to St. Domingo in 1789 amounted to 4,125,610/. During the revolution in the North, or French part of the island, the few remaining part of the white Spaniards emigrated to Porto Rico, and have never yet returned. So that at present, there are but very few, if any, Europeans, or whites of any description, even in that section of the country, which is, nominally, and in fact, in allegiance to old Spain. That this territory is but little valued by the government of Spain, is to be distinctly inferred from a variety of circumstances. The first is this, soon after the subject of emigrating to Hayti, was in agitation, in this city, our valuable friend, John James, did me the favour to introduce me to his friend, his excellency Louis Don Onis, who was then on his way to Washington, with whom we had a liberal conversation, upon the probability of meeting with success, in case an application should be made to his Catholic Majesty's government, to procure that part of the island, which is in allegiance to Spain. And from the tenor of his excellency's remarks, it was the united opinion of both friend James and myself, that the acquisition of it would not be difficult. Another reason which induces the belief that it is not highly valued by the mother country, is, that it is said to be an annual bill of expense to her in its present uncultivated condition; and in a recent conversation, I had the honour of holding with

an intelligent Spanish gentleman, I found that it was principally valued by his countrymen, on account of its being the spot which was first discovered by Columbus.*

The French claims we all know are merely nominal, and may easily be for ever silenced in the contemplated pacification, as without doubt, may all the political connexions of Spain. In this great island there seems to be some foundation, for the hopes of those who are to emigrate to rest upon; as there are already governments established there, which, although they may be arbitrary, and somewhat allied to military despotism in their present features and character, they are still susceptible of being improved, whenever a tranquilized state of society, and their stability and independence as a nation, shall authorize it.

Assembled as this Convention is, for the promotion and extension of its beneficent and humane views and principles, I would respectfully beg leave to lay before it a few remarks upon the character, condition and wants of the afflicted and divided people of Hayti, as they, and that island, may be connected with plans for the emigration of the free people of colour of the United States.

God in the mysterious operation of his provi-

* The third, and by no means the least important fact in support of this opinion is, that Spain ceded the eastern part of the island to France, July 22, 1795.

dence has seen fit to permit the most astonishing changes to transpire upon that naturally beautiful, (and as to soil and productions,) astonishingly luxuriant island.

The abominable principles, both of action and belief, which pervaded France during the long series of vicissitudes which until recently she has experienced, extended to Hayti, or St. Domingo; and have undoubtedly had an extensive influence upon the character, sentiments and feelings of all descriptions of its present inhabitants.

This magnificent and extensive island which has by travellers and historians been often denominated the "paradise of the New World," seems from its situation, extent, climate and fertility, peculiarly suited to become an object of interest and attention, to the many distinguished and enlightened philanthropists, whom God has been graciously pleased to inspire with a zeal for the promotion of the best interests of the descendants of Africa. The recent proceedings in several of the slave states towards the free population of colour in those states, seem to render it highly probable, that, that oppressed class of the community will soon be obliged to flee to the free states for protection. If the two rival governments of Hayti were consolidated into one well balanced pacific power, there are many hundreds of the free people in the New England and middle states, who would be glad to repair there

immediately to settle. And believing that the period has arrived, when many zealous friends to abolition and emancipation are of opinion, that it is time for them to act in relation to an asylum for such persons as shall be emancipated from slavery, or for such portion of the free coloured population at present existing in the United States, as shall feel disposed to emigrate. And being aware that the authorities of Hayti are themselves desirous of receiving emigrants from this country, are among the considerations which have induced me to lay this subject before the Convention.

The present spirit of rivalry which exists between the two chiefs in the French part of the island, and the consequent belligerent aspect and character of the country, may at first sight appear somewhat discouraging to the beneficent views and labours of the friends of peace; but these I am inclined to think are by no means to be considered as insurmountable barriers against the benevolent exertions of those Christian philanthropists whose sincere and hearty desire it is to reunite and pacify them.

There seems to be no probability of their ever being reconciled to each other without the philanthropic interposition and mediation of those who have the welfare of the African race at heart. And where in the whole circle of practical Christian philanthropy, and active beneficence, is there so ample a field for the exertion of those heaven-born virtues

as in that hitherto distracted region? In those unhappy divisions which exist in Hayti is strikingly exemplified the saying which is written in the sacred oracles, "that when men forsake the true worship and service of the only true God, and bow down to images of silver, and gold, and four footed beasts and creeping things, and become contentious with each other," says the inspired writer, "in such a state of things trust ye not a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom; for there the son dishonoureth the father, and the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies shall be those of his own house."

Had the venerable prophet in the foregoing predictions, alluded expressly and entirely to the actual moral, political, and above all, to the religious character and condition of the Haytians, he could scarcely have given a more correct description of it.

For there is scarcely a family whose members are not separated from each other, and arrayed under the banners of the rival chiefs, in virtual hostility against each other. In many instances the husband is with Henry, and the wife and children with Boyer, and there are other instances in which the heads of the family are with Boyer, and the other members with Henry.

Let it be distinctly remembered, that these di-

vided and distressed individuals are not permitted to hold any intercourse with each other; so that it is only when some very extraordinary occurrence transpires, that persons in the different sections of the country receive any kind of information from their nearest relatives and friends.

“Blessed are the peace-makers,” is the language of that celestial law-giver, who taught as never man taught; and his religion uniformly assures the obedient recipients of his spirit, that they shall be rewarded according to the extent, fidelity and sincerity of their works of piety and beneficence.

And if, according to the magnitude of the object in all its political, benevolent, humane and christian relations, the quantum of recompense is to be awarded and apprised to the just, to how large a share of the benediction of our blessed Saviour to the promoters of peace, shall those be authorised to expect, who may be made the instruments of the pacification and reunion of the Haytian people? Surely the blessings of thousands who are, as it were, ready to perish, must inevitably come upon them.

When I reflect that it was in this city that the first abolition society that was formed in the world was established, I am strongly encouraged to hope, that here also there may originate a plan, which shall be the means of restoring many of our fellow beings to the embraces of their families and friends, and place that whole country upon the basis of unanimity and perpetual peace.

If the American Convention should in their wisdom think it expedient to adopt measures for attempting to affect a pacification of the Haytians, it is most heartily believed, that their benevolent views would be hailed and concurred in with alacrity and delight by the English philanthropists.

It is moreover believed that a concern so stupendous in its relations, and bearing upon the cause of universal abolition and emancipation, and to the consequent improvement and elevation of the African race, would tend to awaken an active and an universally deep and active interest in the minds of that numerous host of abolitionists in Great Britain, whom we trust have the best interests of the descendants of Africa deeply at heart. Among those distinguished and illustrious philanthropists are the following gentlemen:

Thomas Clarkson, Esq. W. Wilberforce, Esq. M. P. William Smith, Esq. M. P. William Allen, Esq. Z. McCaulay, Esq. Sir Samuel Romilly, Mr. Vansittart, Lord Teignmouth, Sir Joseph Banks, the Marquis of Downshire, the Bishops of Gloucester, Norwich, London, Salisbury, and Bristol; James Stephens, Esq. William Roscoe, Esq. the Messrs. Babington, Harrison, &c.

The author of these remarks is personally acquainted with most of the above mentioned gentlemen, and has been assured by many of them that they have considered it as one of their highest ho-

hours, as well as its constituting a great portion of pleasing reflection to them, that they have, under Providence, been permitted to aid in affecting the abolition of slavery, and that they were ever ready to unite in any object which might serve to advance the great cause of African improvement and happiness.

It is undoubtedly well known to the Convention, that their Britannic Majesties, the Prince Regent, and, in fact, all the members of the illustrious house of Brunswick, (with one solitary exception) have been zealous in the great cause of African emancipation. Some of whom have particularly distinguished themselves in parliamentary debates, upon the subject of universal abolition. The Duke of Gloucester is to be numbered among the foremost and most zealous friends to the African cause in the whole united kingdom. His Royal Highness was called to the presidential chair at the first regular meeting of the African institution; and has been indefatigable in his endeavours to promote the interests of an establishment which is designed to remunerate Africa for the evils they as a nation have inflicted on her, by now diffusing along her desolated and benighted shores the blessings of legitimate commerce, and all the cheering lights of civilization and instruction in morality and religion.

The following extract of a letter to me from that distinguished philanthropist and enlightened states-

man, the right honourable Sir Joseph Banks, one of his Britannic majesty's most honourable privy counsellors, will serve to evince the views and sentiments not only of that illustrious personage, but of the abolitionists generally in Great Britain, upon the subject of Haytian affairs.

"Spring Grove, Aug. 13, 1816.

"DEAR SIR,

" I beg leave to offer you my best wishes for a prosperous voyage, and a safe return to the very interesting country you are about to re-visit. Allow me to request of you to return my best thanks to the count De Limonade for his obliging letter and present; and assure him that I hold the newly established government of Hayti in the highest respect. It is without doubt in its theory, I mean the Code Henri, the most moral association of men in existence; nothing that white men have been able to arrange is equal to it. To give to the labouring poor of the country a vested interest in the crops they raise, instead of leaving their reward to be calculated by the caprice of the interested proprietor, is a law worthy to be written in letters of gold, as it secures comfort and a proper portion of happiness to those whose lot in the hands of white men endures by far the largest portion of misery.

" That the present possessors of the island of Hayti hold it by the best of human titles, that of

conquest, cannot be doubted; the right by which the French held it, that of having by slow degrees exterminated the aborigines, is neither so honourable nor so equitable a right. We must admit, that the French have a right to re-conquer if they are able; but this, in my view of the subject, is not within the bounds of the most extensive probability. I grieve therefore that the governments of white men have hitherto conceived it imprudent to acknowledge that of their fellow men of Hayti. It is a compliment paid to France, which she does not deserve; for she can have no title to dominion over the men who have destroyed or driven away her hostile troops, and rid their country from the pollution of those sanguinary wretches who then enjoyed the name of Frenchmen. Perseverance, however, in the line of conduct laid down in the Code Henri cannot but in due time conquer all difficulties, and bring together the black and white varieties of mankind under the ties of mutual and reciprocal equality and brotherhood, which the bountiful Creator of all things has provided for the advantage of both parties."

That portion of the Code Henri alluded to in the foregoing extract, in all its relative departments and bearings, is to be found in my compilation of Haytian documents.

PRINCE SAUNDERS.